

PLANNING IN HUMAN SOCIETY

The Plans of Men

By Prof. Leonard W. Doob. (Published for the Institute of Human Relations.) Pp. xiii+411. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1940.) 18s. 6d. net.

PROF. DOOB, of Yale University, has in this volume attempted a comprehensive treatment of the subject of planning. It perhaps suffers from being too comprehensive, nearly half the book consisting of prolegomena in the shape of a general discussion of the main types of human activity, biological, social, political and economic. Prof. Doob also suffers from the common failure of sociologists to reconcile their conscience as pure scientists with a firm and constructive handling of the problem of values. In especial, no adequate attention is given to the question of the hierarchy of values—in fact, the author goes so far as to assert that “no man can say whether the gratification secured from beer is or is not different qualitatively from that obtained by reading a sonnet”—a statement which to the reviewer appears plain nonsense, on a par with saying that no one can say whether the sensation of red is qualitatively different from that of green.

In another place, in an effort to escape from his dilemma, Prof. Doob claims that to demonstrate a *qualitative* differentiation among gratifications is impossible unless one can prove that some are *more gratifying* than others (*italics mine*). But surely all attempts to interpret quality in terms of quantity are logically inadmissible?

Passing from criticism to appreciation, the reader can find much of interest in Prof. Doob's book. In the first place, he rightly stresses the fact that planning is not some mysterious new type of activity which has emerged since the War of 1914–18 as a product of the U.S.S.R. or the New Deal, but a universal attribute of all human activity, both individual and social. Its scope and the degree of its organization vary enormously, and the problem of the present is to determine, not whether planning in the abstract is or is not a good thing, but on what scale and by what machinery planning should operate. On this subject, Prof. Doob has some valuable comments. He is in general opposed to what he calls “master planning”, in which an attempt is made to provide big plans for an entire social economy; and he produces a number of arguments for the adoption wherever possible of regional planning, as exemplified already in the Tennessee Valley Authority. This gives more flexibility and makes better provision for “cultural self-determination”. (In this connexion, it is perhaps of interest to point out that Prof. Sewall Wright, of Chicago, has demonstrated that in biology the most favourable opportunity for evolutionary change is afforded by large species subdivided into subspecies which are partially but not wholly isolated from each other.)

“The Plans of Men” is perhaps not a book for the layman, however inquiring and intelligent; but it deserves serious study by sociologists and all those who may be concerned with the theory or practice of planning. J. S. H.

PROGRESS IN BIOCHEMISTRY

Annual Review of Biochemistry

James Murray Luck, Editor; James H. C. Smith, Associate Editor. Vol. 9. Pp. ix+744. (Stanford University P.O., Calif.: Annual Reviews, Inc., 1940.) 5 dollars.

SCIENTIFIC workers cannot escape the welter of events, the horrors and anxieties of the moment. It is well, therefore, to be reminded occasionally that there is a normal side, that peaceful creative life exists. Such demonstration is welcome: it comes from across the Atlantic in the form of 743 pages

of biochemical abstracts. True, the work described was done before war began, and the summaries, two of which are from Danish contributors, were written before April 1939. Everywhere there is progress, whilst some of the work will have practical application at a time when knowledge of food values and of much else in biochemistry will play a part in saving lives and in contributing to health in Great Britain.

Food is rationed. In twenty-five years the consideration of calories has given way to that of quality. The Minister of Food, acting under scientific